

# HARLEM FRIENDSHIP HOUSE NEWS

Vol. 3, No. 4, Sept., 1943

Without Interracial Justice

Social Justice Will Fail

New York, N. Y., 5 Cents

## GRACIAS, SENOR DE PORRES

by James E. Bulger

**T**HE Baroness had told a group of Chicagoans, the Serra Club, and their guests, something of the work of Friendship House, and after the meeting Nellie said to her, "I should like nothing better than to be able to help you, but it would be impossible for me to go down to the south side unless we sell our house and get an apartment near town."

Of course, the Baroness said, "We'll have to talk to Martin about that."

We had often discussed selling, but, we reasoned, "who would buy an oil-heated house with rationing in effect, and who would go out to the suburbs where transportation is a real problem at any time but especially now with gas rationing?" Our reasoning was good but we reckoned without Blessed Martin.

We had lived in the house for fourteen years; John had grown from childhood to manhood there, and memories of days that were gone tumbled around the place. There was the house itself, a memory of Father John Handly, our Paulist friend, who prayed John into the world, as he often said, and for whom our boy was named. Father Handly had designed the house. "The living room should be large," he explained as he went over the sketches he had drawn, "and the dining room should be elevated two or three steps above the living room. Here we need a stained glass window of the Blessed Virgin." Mary Immaculate is always in his mind and in his heart. We weren't able to get the stained glass window in time, so we compromised on a niche over the fireplace, and there Our Lady stood guard over us through the years.

Then there was the night Father Handly had blessed the house. It was a weird night, with thunder booming and lightning flashing, and as we walked from cellar to garret with lighted tapers, we wondered if the powers of darkness were displeased. Memories there were, too, of adventures with the Knights of the Round Table, as together we journeyed from

that point up to the college days when we saw the first glimmering of interest in Keats and Shelley, and then in philosophy days we had as our companions the great St. Thomas and his champion of modern times, Jacques Maritain. Warriors, poets, statesmen, and saints had come to visit us.

**F**ORTUNATELY, however, the spirit of Man does not live within brick walls; his dreams, loves, and loyalties are within, and attachment to a place was a sentimentality of which none of us was guilty. Much

was to be gained by a move, but a house of artistic merit has a market only among those who appreciate an attractive setting more than a streamlined kitchen. We had built with no idea of ever selling. One had to have at least one car to live in our community, and prospects for a house would be frightened by gas restrictions; as for the fuel oil situation, well, we had frozen in two rooms, and if anyone under such conditions wanted to buy the house, we feared his mental state would be such as to make the contract not binding.

In addition to the difficulties of trying to dispose of the house, there was the question of getting a desirable apartment. We had heard much of this problem. We wanted to be near a large church where any morning one could hear a number of Masses. St. Vincent's came to mind. This church is a gold mine, with Masses frequently being said at a half dozen altars. I have a picture of Father Mateo, famed apostle of the Sacred Heart, sitting huddled in a corner of the old church as Mass after Mass was celebrated. Occasionally I would have a word with him. If we could find a place near St. Vincent's and make this rare occurrence a daily one, that would be ideal, but, of course, we were simply day dreaming.

**W**E PRAYED to Blessed Martin. In my case it was not with the confidence and absolute conviction that have characterized other petitions before and since. The miraculous power of prayer, we are told, lies not in the holiness of the petitioner but in his confidence. I was out on two counts. Perhaps the Baroness divined in Nellie one who could do things; the sick, unfortunate and downtrodden of the earth always are her friends; the old, infirm, and those sick at heart are her specialties. Friendship House can use such helpers, and Blessed Martin knew it.

It must have been that way, because out of the blue came a buyer. He

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**HARLEM FRIENDSHIP HOUSE NEWS**

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**AN ACT OF CONTRITION**

**T**HE night was hot and sultry . . . Thunder was in the air . . . Harlem seemed strangely restless and tense . . . But then it had been restless and tense before, our poor overcrowded Harlem, so strangely misunderstood and unknown even by the inhabitants of the big fair City-by-the-Sea, that is New York, not to mention the rest of the Nation.

So often written up. By poets, authors, newsmen . . . yet seldom fully, correctly interpreted. Harlem, for whom a special litany of names was created — "Negro Metropolis," "City within a City," "Mother of Jazz," "Father of the Zoot Suit," "Den of Iniquity," "Harbinger of Vice and Violent Passions," "City of lust . . ." Harlem of the many Social Agencies and endless, learned "Surveys" and "Reports" . . . on housing, health, juvenile delinquency . . .

But how few have come to Harlem from the big outside White World, with understanding in their souls? With Justice in their hearts? With a hand ready not only to help the Negro, but clasp his hand in warm friendship of one American to another? And how few have looked and seen . . . with seeing eyes . . . listened and heard with hearing ears . . . that other Harlem, unsung, unnoticed, undescribed?

The hidden Harlem of homes, poor perhaps, but where God and love reign . . . where a super, heroic struggle goes on daily, making strong, great men and women, that have, and are, contributing to the greatness of America, and to her strength? The Harlem of Churches—Catholic and Protestant, where resolutely and fearlessly, Negro souls worship, cling and follow the paths of the Lord, against such odds, that would have made faint-hearted many a Saint? What of the thousands of Negroes within that incredible city, who incredibly struggle day in and day out, to keep their dignity as men and children of God, so cruelly, so ruthlessly denied them, by the vast majority of their white brethren?

**H**ARLEM has no monopoly on vice, juvenile delinquency etc. . . these can and are to be found in other parts of New York, and other cities of America. And even if Harlem suffers from them more abundantly . . . May we ask "WHOSE IS THE SIN AND WHY?" Who gave us the right to segregate our brother in Christ because his skin is dark, apart from the rest of us? By whose permission from on high, do we close so many doors to equal education and opportunities, to the Negro, whilst at the same time boasting of our Democracy and Christianity?

It is because we have usurped powers that do not belong to us, because we have flouted, hypocritically, the mighty, immutable tenets of God's own law . . . that that sultry, hot, thunderous night in Harlem of August first . . . broke into the Great Riot. What accident brought it about is of no import. What matters is that the tinder of pain was dry . . . the fires of injustice, though banked,

had eaten deep into men's souls . . . This night—another night . . . it would have broken . . . in Detroit . . . New York City, elsewhere. It may yet.

**W**ORDS, and investigating committees are good . . . but not good enough. Nor do they reach far enough. What we need, is a loud act of contrition, an act of contrition with a true purpose of immediate amendment!

What matters that only hoodlums took part in the New York City riots . . . and that the good people of Harlem stayed at home . . . Deep down in every Negro heart, racial injustice, Jim Crowism and discrimination run deep . . . and hurt much. And if we do not face ourselves and God in the reality of our Faith and Democracy . . . then we will lose more than money, honour, prestige and even perhaps the war on a spiritual scale . . . We will lose our very souls . . . And that is the ultimate of all tragedies . . . So let us repent . . . and mete out justice so that we can gather its fruit — PEACE . . .

**CHICAGO HOUSE**

409 East 43rd Street

by Ann Harrigan

**W**HAT is the difference between Catholic social work and other kinds? This caused quite a heated argument one Monday night when June Gardner spoke. Catholic social workers should have *vocations*, not be professionals, for this is a work that involves probing the most intimate secrets of family life, requiring the super-delicate touch of a person supernaturally dedicated to serve. "If you do that, then you'll talk yourself out of a job in no time," rejoined Miss Gardner to Ed Marciniak. Said Ed, "That's fine, but not necessary." He vehemently defended the idea of living with the people, to know what they're up against . . . and further . . . this was a bombshell—that voluntary poverty was necessary. When the storm quieted down, I asked, "What is voluntary poverty?"

People have the idea that voluntary poverty is supposed to make you a skeleton dressed in rags. But I know a young couple who teach in a mid-western Catholic college and they look like everybody else, yet they practise voluntary poverty, because they live on their small salary so thus they can leaven young minds with ideas about a militant, Catholic lay apostolate that young people need. This is voluntary poverty . . . limiting your DESIRES to fewer things so that you have more time to spend in the service of others. Possessions tend to possess you. The more you have, the less there is for others. So, just reverse the process—the less you have the more there is for others.

But, more important than all others, who is our model if not Jesus Christ Himself, who was poorer than the poorest, about whom the psalmist said, "the birds of the air have their nests, but the Son of Man hath not whereon to lay his hand." He is our model. Being humble, detached and loving are the instruments to kill prejudice.

**I**CAME back from vacation and found Friendship House quiet. Too quiet. Lillian had gone into the hospital suddenly, and is still very sick. Worst of all, Mrs. Wiley was gone to the NCCS—something we knew was coming, but dreaded. It will be almost impossible to replace Mildred. Everyone will miss her, from the

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## STAFF REPORTER

by N. J. G.

**S**EPTEMBER . . . and on its heels have come several changes to Friendship House personnel . . . some sad, some glad.

Gone are the Visiting Volunteers of the summer . . . and we miss them. We miss Mabel Knight . . . she of the smiling countenance and laughing voice . . . and abounding charity that was quick to see what needed doing . . . and did it. A joy at meals, for her laugh rang out often, and her repartee was humorously kind.

Gone is Esther Davis, back to her last year in High School in Cleveland. Already she is making plans for returning next year . . . she loved FH as much as we loved her. Only sixteen . . . you should see her firm, strong hand with the children. They adored her. She will be a grand social worker some day, our little Esther.

Gone too is Marie Cepican, for a rest at her home in Iowa. How long she will be gone, depends on her health, for Marie gave of herself so generously in the Clothing Room . . . inspired by her deep love of God and understanding love for her neighbor. Marie will be greatly missed . . . her friends in Harlem are legion. Not only did she distribute clothing in FH . . . but that priceless commodity . . . Faith. Many, many a person — and family — has found God and peace and happiness, because Marie was never too tired to talk, never too tired to listen or visit. She will be missed much . . . yet we are happy she is getting a vacation so richly deserved.

Gone also is Paul Butler, alas . . . yet with joy we saw him return to his true vocation, the priesthood. In three short years Paul will be celebrating Mass. What favors from Heaven we shall reap with "one of our own" on the altar! We nicknamed Paul "Martin de Porres" for everyone is better for having known Paul in FH. He had a way with the older children that was almost miraculous . . . quiet, always smiling, gentle . . . Bl. Martin truly walked in Harlem while Paul was with us.

Thus our Staff is greatly diminished, but there remains Flewey of the able paintbrush and deep charity . . . Eleanor who takes care of the seventy little Cubs like a mother . . . gracious, beautiful Belle, who has the Clothing Room and Social Service Dept. under control . . . Katherine Regan, sweetly and efficiently being House Mother to us all . . . and Loretta Clifford . . .

Four years a volunteer, Loretta has

## THE BARONESS JOTS IT DOWN

**Y**ES, we had a riot the night of August first. In our editorial for this month I have written a special article about it. (Page 2.) Many of our friends have written and called us up. Worrying about us in Harlem. We thank them all. It is so nice to be worried about, for that means that behind the worry there is friendship and love. Thank you everyone . . . thank you all. You could not give us a greater gift than that.

But to us personally, the riot was not unexpected. For what else can happen when a whole group of good Americans are being pushed down and down along the path of their lives. Denied common justice. Relegated eternally into the back seat of a great democracy. In cases like that, alas, there always comes the straw that breaks the camel's back. . . that straw arrived August 1st, 1943.

We all thank God at Friendship House that He allowed us to share this dark hour with our friends, the Negroes. It was a great privilege to open Friendship House as usual and stand by in case of need. We thank our fellow Americans of Harlem for being appreciative of our presence. But what else could we have done? We came to Harlem five and one-half years ago . . . to share with our colored brothers their joys, pains and sorrows. To help them in whatever small way we could, and hand-in-hand, to work for Interracial Justice. Rain or shine. Riots or peace. War or depressions. And with the help of God we intend to go on doing just that. Rewarded already beyond our deserts by their friendship and confidence.

**C**OMBERMERE. A foreign sounding place. Yet truly a part of the breath-taking beauty of the North American Continent. Rugged. Hilly. With hundred-year-old pine trees, making a jagged skyline against the soft, blue-grey of the northern skies . . . Reciting in their own fashion Lauds, None, Sext, Vespers and all

the other "Day and Night Hours" to the Lord. Silvery, dreamy, the Madawaska river flows by, into countless lakes—joining other rivers . . .

Combermere — A Catholic Countryside . . . Where Brebeuf seems to walk again. Where, maybe on this hill, or that, one or the other of the Jesuit Martyrs preached to the Indians . . . The little-White-Church-of-the-Sacred-Heart, that stands by the river, and reflects itself in it, so that at times one forgets which is which—the reflection in the water, the Church . . . or the other way around. It has a benevolent and beloved Pastor, Father Pat Dwyer . . . who dreams a dream . . . has done so for a long time . . . And that dream is all wrapped up in the Jesuit Martyrs and no wonder . . . for right by the Church is a hill, and Jean Brebeuf himself is said to have preached from it . . . So Father Pat (his parishioners call him that) Dwyer would like to build the Jesuits a shrine right on top of that very hill . . . But where is a poor country priest to get FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS . . . to make a road, reinforce the hill with stones, build a log church, an exact replica of the one Indians worshipped in, long, long ago . . . erect carved stations of the Cross, all the way up to the hill . . . We ask you friends . . . where is Father Pat Dwyer of Combermere, Ontario, Canada (that is his P.O. address) to get the money . . . ?

**P**ERHAPS some of you love the Jesuit Martyrs as much as we of Friendship House do . . . then why not write to Father Dwyer and tell him so . . . (as per address above) and send a dollar or two, with a request to those grand soldiers of Christ—the Martyred Jesuits to pray for your soldier boy . . . husband or father . . . Make your cheques or money orders out to Rev. Fr. Patrick Dwyer and add "for the Jesuit Martyr Shrine" . . . You will not regret it.

at long last joined the Staff of Friendship House. What an addition she is! Four years of working with the older children . . . she is a gem, brilliantly polished and glowing with love of God and His little ones. Her commonsense plus charming personality has influenced many a child for good. In the Clothing Room also, Loretta will spread the spirit of FH . . . in-

terracial justice. She is tops, and then some!

**E**VERY Monday night during the year, Friendship House has an Open Forum meeting. Only once this year have we missed . . . because the Mayor called a curfew the night after the recent disturbance, and we complied. But the phone rang all day,

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**STAFF REPORTER***(Continued from Page 3)*

asking about the meeting. These forums are as much a part of Friendship House as the library itself, or the clubrooms.

The Autumn programs will include such noteworthy speakers as Father Gillis, editor of the Catholic World, Judge Jackson, authority on Juvenile Delinquency, Msgr. Scully of the Chancery office... the Baroness, Eddie Doherty, the famous Benedictine, Father Damascus among others. Always a subject of interest to Catholics... to all who are in earnest about interracialism, justice, charity. You who live in and around New York... won't you come some Monday soon? 8:30 P. M. at the library, 34 West 135th St. ... just one-half block from the Lenox Ave. subway.

**Q**UITE soon, when Bl. Martin gets us the wherewithal, we plan to enlarge Friendship House news to tabloid size. For some time now our paper has been much too small to do the job that needs doing. CHICAGO HOUSE will have one full page... as they should... for much happens in that Friendship House that is noteworthy.

From you, our readers, we would appreciate suggestions. What would YOU like to see in Friendship House News? More articles on the Negro question? More discussions of a Catholic nature? Letters from readers? Book reviews? Always... from the first day of its little mimeographed beginning under Mary Jerdo Keating's able direction, it has tried to be a paper YOU, our good friends want to read. This is your chance to let us know... please write in your ideas... thank you.

**CHICAGO HOUSE***(Continued from Page 2)*

youngest kid to the oldest worker. Her work as Children's Director has been outstanding. From July 5th to August 15th we had (according to the Keatings) one of the best recreation places in the city. The entire running of FH was also her job. Our dear Betty Schneider was here to help, but Mildred had the major responsibility. Yet with a family to care for... it is her primary duty. Wherever she works she will exercise that rare charity and true gentility

that we all loved and admired. Our prayers and good wishes go with you, dearest Mildred.

Doc left. Those two words really contain tragedy, for when Uncle Sam called him, there went one of the best men who ever opened that little blue door on East 43rd St. Who will ever forget the famous water cooler, or the screen doors, or the electric lights, the washed windows, the pattering around with 100 odd jobs to do. There was a royal send-off, but nothing would be too royal for Doc.

**C**PL. BERNARD JAMES, walked in tonight and gave us the start of our life. What a sight for sore eyes! Scarcely had we sat down than it developed that the cook would be out for the evening... so he offered to make dinner. He will be with us for a week... then off... probably overseas... and that means a long, long time between visits. Later, Ensign O'Brien had a few hours between trains (he married Marian Fitzgerald, 'member?) so he was in for supper. Ditto, Lt. Charley Ward.

"I have done a lot of thinking since I've been away, and the more I see the more I am convinced that my future will be, after war, linked with Friendship House. There must be an extension of Catholic principles, here in the south particularly..." writes Dave James of the Army Air Corps in Tuskegee, and I hear that Captain Jack Fisher thinks the same. Another former volunteer writes: "Some things you have to put up with in the army take all the faith and religion you have, but those at FH have given me the strength to carry on... it is for people like you that we are fighting this war, and that helps it to make sense..."

This winter we plan many things so as to continue to stand four square for justice to all men. We need your prayers... constant and frequent.

**GRACIAS, SENOR***(Continued from Page 1)*

wanted the house and wanted it quick. The real estate man had told us there was not much of a market for houses such as ours; smaller houses were far easier to sell. That seemed to make sense. We had visualized many showings, long deliberations, but here we were with the money on the line. The sale was completed quickly, and almost magically we had obtained a desirable apartment.

It was in Mt. Carmel parish where I had been baptized, and there was something significant about going home after all the years. It was a joy, too, to be within the folds of Our Lady of Mount Carmel's mantel. For the morning Masses we were close to the Vincentian's church. On Thursdays it isn't much of a jaunt to the Dominican church of St. Pius, which seems to be the special home of St. Jude and Bl. Martin.

**T**HESE advantages Bl. Martin brought to us, and we want him to know we appreciate it. Last night an orange moon slid out of the lake, a miracle I have not seen since I was a small boy, when my father after a visit with our aunts in the orphan home of St. Joseph would take me down to the lake to see the moon rise from its black depths.

This morning the sun rose over the lake and painted a path of gold to the shore, a scene that enraptured St. Therese of Lisieux as she sat with Pauline watching the sun gild the ocean. Gracias, Senor De Porres; gracias, amigo! Should I thank Lima's wonder worker for the packet of war bonds that was left on my desk even as I finished this thank you note? I think the money for the sale of the house is unimportant and trivial when compared with the great riches he has piled at our feet: a half dozen Masses each morning, an orange moon, a path of gold in the lake, and a chance for Nellie to work with Martin's brothers and sisters.

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